

# ND PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS

A Newsletter for Project Managers

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Thank you for taking the time to read the *ND Project Management Newsletter*! The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you information about project management-related topics and events in North Dakota Government and Higher Education.

## PM News

### Project Management Standard Released

Upon completion of the *North Dakota Project Management Guidebook*, the Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Advisory Group began the task of updating Standard STD009-98. This standard, formerly known as Information Technology Project Management, has been in place since November 1998. The revised version, STD009-05, Project Management of Large Information Technology Projects, has been aligned with the *Project Management Institute's Project Management Body of Knowledge* and the *North Dakota Project Management Guidebook*.



The basic elements of the standard include the use of tools such as a business case, project charter, project plan, and post-implementation review.

Additionally, the standard addresses the management practices of assigning a project manager and establishing an executive steering committee. Finally, the oversight and reporting function is addressed. This process includes project status reporting, performance assessment, and quarterly summary reports to the Legislative Council.

As a best practice, this standard may serve as a guideline for any project of any size. As a rule, this standard impacts those information technology projects that fall within the statutory requirements regarding large project oversight. For additional information, refer to [NDCC 54-35-15.2-3](#) and [NDCC 54-59-19.1,3,6](#). STD009-05 can be viewed at <http://www.state.nd.us/epm/oversight/index.html>.

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## **Earned Value Management Training**

Recently, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Information Technology Department (ITD) combined efforts to bring Humphreys and Associates to North Dakota for a one-day training session regarding project management using the concept of Earned Value. Humphreys and Associates is an internationally recognized leader in Earned Value Management. CEO Gary Humphreys was the principal speaker at this event.

Earned Value is defined as the value of completed and partially completed work expressed in terms of the budget assigned to that work. Attendees at this session learned about a variety of related topics including Work Breakdown Structures (WBS), Organization Breakdown Structures (OBS), Statement of Work (SOW), scheduling, budgeting, cost/schedule performance, cost/schedule variance, forecasting, and more.

An introduction to Earned Value Management, including a simulation, will be scheduled for an upcoming Project Management User Group (PMUG) training session in early 2005.

## **About Project Management**

### **Uno, Dos, Tres...**

Heather Raschke

Head spinning, ears ringing, vision blurry... To quote Bono, "We're in a place called Vertigo." The knowledge required to be an information technology (IT) project manager can cause dizziness in the best of us.

It is easy for IT project managers to be overwhelmed with the vast amount of knowledge and expertise that is expected of them. First and foremost, IT project managers are required to know Project Management (PM) Methodology inside and out. Beyond knowing the methodology, being able to apply it is the tricky part. IT project managers may feel that they need to be experts in a myriad of IT functions (e.g., system development, networking, telecommunications, etc). The expectation of being a technological savant can be quite stressful (not to mention the inevitable questions of "My home PC doesn't work, can you fix it?"). Lastly, we are also required to be well-versed in the business we conduct projects for. When attending computer science courses in college, did you anticipate your future job would require knowledge of how to calculate the required pavement thickness of a roadway?

Learning the three areas (project management; information technology; and business processes, practices, and procedures) can be difficult. How can you do this and maintain your sanity? Surround yourself with "gurus." While you should be able to speak intelligently regarding networks, databases, and object-oriented code, it is OK to be technologically challenged compared to network administrators, database administrators (DBAs), and programmers. The same is true of the business aspects of the project. The key is to find and assign the right people. Trust their abilities and hold them professionally accountable for their tasks and the information they provide.

In short, you may feel external or self-imposed pressure to be a tri-subject expert. Focus on project management, trust your subject matter experts, and learn what you can to make intelligent decisions and lead the project.

## Ask the EPM Advisory Group

**Question** – I’ve heard people talking about NITAS, and my supervisor told me that I should sign up. What is NITAS, and what are the benefits to me?

**Answer** – Probably the most common question asked recently has been about the National Information Technology Apprenticeship System (NITAS) program. NITAS was created as a result of a grant by the Federal Department of Labor. The Department of Labor has been in the apprenticeship business for decades. You have probably heard of an apprentice plumber or a journeyman electrician.

Those titles are the result of a set of standards developed by the Department of Labor to ensure that all persons in a field achieve the same level of competency. This is generally obtained via on-the-job learning, continuing education, skills validation, and certification. That sounds like a lot, but it is nice to know that when you hire a journeyman electrician, there is a good chance that your house will not burn down due to faulty wiring.

The Department of Labor determined there was a need for a variety of apprenticeship models in the information technology field due to the continuing growth of the industry. They awarded a grant to CompTIA, a non-profit company that has specialized in information technology certifications. Still under development, the NITAS model includes 11 areas of specialization. These include technical specializations such as help desk, security, web services, and networking, as well as managerial and integration fields like project management and business analysis. Presently, the Information Technology Department, Architecture Review Board, and State Information Technology Advisory Committee have approved a pilot of the NITAS project management apprenticeship model. This pilot will be managed through the Enterprise Project Management Office and offered on an enterprise-wide basis.

Through the NITAS model, IT project managers in North Dakota will have the opportunity to gain a nationally recognized, competency based certification in their field of expertise.

An informational session will be held on January 11 to provide additional details. This session is intended for potential apprentices, those who may qualify to be program mentors, supervisors who may have either an apprentice or mentor involved in the program, and any other person who is interested in learning more about the apprenticeship initiative. For additional information, contact Mark Molesworth at (701) 328-4474.

*The ND Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Advisory Group is a small workgroup of project managers who proactively identify project management issues, and assist in the collection and development of project management best practices such as tools and templates. Have a question for the EPM Advisory Group? Send it to Mark Molesworth at [epmadmin@state.nd.us](mailto:epmadmin@state.nd.us).*

## Featured PM Web Sites

**National Information Technology Apprenticeship System**

<http://www.nitas.us/>

**CompTIA**

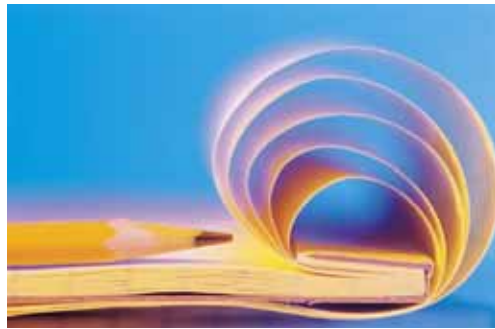
<http://www.comptia.org/>

### First Time Project Managers Need Failures

Opinion by Paul Glen

Nothing succeeds like success, except in project management where nothing succeeds like failure.

Managing an IT project is very difficult; especially the first time you try it. The project manager's days and nights are filled with stress, worry, dreams, aspirations, and fear.



Some first timers are overwhelmed by their newfound power, while some are weighed down by the responsibility. But for most, the overriding concern is to avoid both personal and project failure.

This fear is often instilled and/or reinforced by the project manager's supervisor. The new assignment is often initiated with comments like, "Don't screw this up. This is your big chance to shine." Or, "Don't make me look bad and regret giving you this opportunity." Trust me,

those sorts of comments really help first timers succeed.

For the project manager, this sort of fear is not only counterproductive, but also misplaced. In fact, I think that every first time project manager desperately needs to fail. That's right. I'm not just saying that it's ok to fail; I'm saying that if they don't fail, they may never learn to be effective project managers. In fact, complete success may set their management careers back by years.

As a manager, consultant, trainer, and coach, I've had the opportunity to work with hundreds of first time project managers, and I've become convinced that one of the greatest impediments to their success is their need to succeed. If against all odds they do manage to succeed, they fall prey to the twin career killers, arrogance and self-confidence, depriving them of the opportunity to grow and learn.

Project management is such a complex discipline that it's completely impossible for a first timer to have mastered all the subtleties of task, people, and risk management. In fact, it's impossible for anyone, no matter how experienced to have mastered it all. The successful first timer is invariably lulled into a false sense of security that they know much more than they really do. They become convinced that they are now full-fledged managers and can take on anything.

What's more dangerous is that they get brain freeze. They stop learning. Why learn when you have mastered a topic?

It can take two or three failed projects to undo the career damage inflicted by early success, before new project managers reclaim the humility and open-mindedness that they started with. Unfortunately, by that time, their careers have probably absorbed major damage. It's one thing to be seen as making a few mistakes as a first timer. It's another to have demonstrated a pattern of failure. Both the manager's image and self-image have been irretrievably damaged.

## Featured PM Article

So what does the first timer need?

- A few big mistakes
- Permission to make those mistakes
- Coaching and introspection to learn from them

If you are a first time project manager, be prepared for some problems along the way. Relax and enjoy the ride. No one will lose respect for you.

If you are the manager of first timers, give them permission to make mistakes. When they do, make sure that they learn from them and don't make the same ones again. Coach them about the sources of problems and the meaning of their failures. It's normal for them to have difficulties, but make sure that you view them as training investments and not as screw-ups. Your job is to ensure that you get the maximum return on investment for the training that mistakes offer.

Becoming a project manager is hard work, but a little failure will help make the transition from individual producer to manager more successful.

*Paul Glen is the author of the award-winning book "Leading Geeks: How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology" (Jossey Bass Pfeiffer, 2003) and Principal of C2 Consulting. C2 Consulting helps IT management solve people problems. Paul Glen regularly speaks for corporations and national associations across North America. For more information, go to [www.c2-consulting.com](http://www.c2-consulting.com). He can be reached at [info@c2-consulting.com](mailto:info@c2-consulting.com).*

### ND PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS

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